

Neighborhood Watch

citizen's Crime Prevention Program

A Partnership with the
Herndon Police and
Herndon Crime Prevention
Council



hCPC

Herndon Crime Prevention Council

Helping to Build a Safer Community

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What is a Neighborhood Watch?

A Neighborhood Watch is a program where citizens, in cooperation with their local law enforcement agency, participate in detection and crime prevention in their communities.

Citizens are trained to recognize suspicious persons or activities and report those persons or activities to the police department. Alert citizens act as the eyes and ears of the police and create an effective partnership that can reduce crime and make your community a safer place.

Why should I join a Neighborhood Watch program?

The benefits are clear...

- ❖ When citizens within your community join together and become actively involved in the watching, caring, and protection of their neighborhood, criminal activity is reduced.
- ❖ You can help make a difference about crime in your neighborhood by keeping informed and staying alert.
- ❖ You can help make your neighborhood a safer and more pleasant place to live!
- ❖ You gain a sense of pride and accomplishment from contributing to your community.
- ❖ You will meet your neighbors and create new friendships.
- ❖ Your property value may increase as a result of reduced neighborhood crime.
- ❖ You may obtain a free home security inspection to ensure safety for you and your family.
- ❖ The display of Neighborhood Watch signs will send a warning signal to criminals that your neighborhood is committed to preventing crime.
- ❖ You can receive monthly crime reports to see the positive impact you are making on your community.

What are the goals of a Neighborhood Watch?

- ❖ To create a greater awareness of crime in your area and understand how you can help prevent it.
- ❖ To provide citizens with crime prevention training to make your family, property and neighborhood safer.
- ❖ To get to know and improve your relationship with the local police department and assist the police department in reporting of suspicious persons or activities.
- ❖ To encourage all residents to cooperate with the Herndon Police Department, in the reporting of crime.

How can I help Prevent Crime?

- ❖ Improve your outdoor lighting, front and back.
- ❖ Keep your car doors locked and windows shut, even when in the garage.
- ❖ Don't keep valuable items in plain view of your car.
- ❖ Keep your doors, garage, and windows shut and locked at all times.
- ❖ Don't leave lawn equipment or toys outside at night.
- ❖ Let people know you care about your property – maintain the yard, trim the bushes.
- ❖ When you take a vacation ask someone to pick up your mail and paper, daily.
- ❖ Log suspicious vehicles or individuals in your neighborhood.

How do I start a Neighborhood Watch?

It takes a lot of dedication and commitment from a community and its leaders to start a Neighborhood Watch, keep it alive, and make it successful.

Much of your success will be based on your initial commitment to this endeavor and your willingness to lay a foundation that will ensure that your Watch will be sanctioned. Here are some of the key rules that our most successful Watch efforts have grown from.

Make the initial contact in person. Sometimes coordinators place the surveys on their neighbors doors and wait for the calls to come pouring in. When the calls don't come, they interpret the low response as a lack of interest. Personal contact is a must when you are trying to pitch a new program in an area as busy as the Town of Herndon. It is much easier to disregard a piece of paper, than a well-intentioned neighbor.

Provide sufficient notification and a personal reminder. Hand out the flyer, put up neighborhood signs and make calls the night before the meeting.

Organize the Neighborhood Watch. During your initial contact with your neighbors determine who shows the highest level of interest and consider these people for Block Captains.

Provide an adequate meeting facility. This should be as close to the community as possible. While we have had successful meetings for small groups in large living rooms, basements and garages, we have found that homes are generally too small for a meeting location. A nearby church, clubhouse, school, firehouse or the Neighborhood Resource Center may be available.

Identify neighborhood problems and needs. It is essential to identify ways to deal with crime in a specific area, and the pattern of crime it may create. By working with the police department identify what types of crime exist in the area, and work together to find ways to reduce and eliminate those activities.

Keep the Neighborhood Watch separate from the Community

Homeowners Association (HOA). This is recommended because HOA's deal with issues that can sometimes be political or controversial. If you link the two and the HOA becomes embroiled in an issue, the Watch may end up as a casualty. However, HOA's can provide support, by the enforcement of the covenants, to improve the appearance of the community or funding Watch patrol equipment.

Once you start, DON'T STOP. Too much down time between these steps can be disastrous. This entire process should take no more than six weeks from first call to the community-training meeting.

Keep your momentum. It is important to keep the enthusiasm going. Consider choosing new projects so that there is always something on which to keep the focus.



Proven Tips for Getting People Involved

- ❖ Utilize Block Captains as much as possible. As Coordinator, you must check the progress of each Block Captain as they fill their rosters. This is a team effort and although you will be leading the way as the Coordinator you will need help.
- ❖ Don't be afraid to encourage people. You are selling a product, and ideal – the security of one's neighborhood, home, family, and self, which is a basic need for everyone. Don't let them bring out the old standby "That's for the police to do". We can't do it alone and you can tell them we said so.
- ❖ If they say they are busy on meeting nights, ask what time of week would be better for future meetings.
- ❖ Don't let people take the attitude that they can sit back and let their neighbors do it. Their participation is necessary for the success of the program and their contribution is helping keep their neighborhood safe.
- ❖ Encourage everyone to participate. People can participate at different levels – not everyone has to actively patrol. Don't let the citizen patrol component scare them off. This program offers flexibility for all citizens to participate.
- ❖ Seek out and use the resources of your group. For example, who can copy handouts at work, who may have a computer to manage a database or make a newsletter?
- ❖ Expect to suffer some setbacks, such as having a door slammed in your face. Continue to push and show your concern and enthusiasm for your community. It will be contagious.

Neighborhood Watch Code

Home Security

We will conduct security inspections of our homes and practice realistic security measures to include:

- Securing doors, windows, garages, personal property and automobiles.
- Lighting front and rear areas of our homes during the hours of darkness.
- Marking our personal property by engraving or other means, to deter theft and expedite the recovery of stolen items.
- Coordinating activities and extended absences with our immediate neighbors or block captains to ensure adequate security coverage.

Community Awareness

We will be watchful for any unusual or suspicious persons, activities, or vehicles in our neighborhood. We will take no action other than calling the police. We will not approach anyone.

Crime Reporting

If we suspect or observe a crime in progress, or see evidence of a crime having been committed, we will contact the police immediately at **9-1-1** for **emergencies** and **703-435-6846** for **non-emergencies**.

Watch Patrol

We will take every opportunity during the course of our daily activities to go out of our way to be observant. When called upon, we will participate in scheduled Neighborhood Watch patrol and will abide by the patrol instructions issued by the Town of Herndon Police.

Education and Recruiting

We will explain to our children, new neighbors, friends and others, the purpose of the Neighborhood Watch Program and its benefits. We will solicit their support and encourage them to contribute to the program within their capabilities as responsible citizens.

Safety

We recognize the goals of Neighborhood Watch to be personal safety, protection of property and an enhanced quality of life for our neighborhood. We will not endanger ourselves or others to achieve these goals. We understand that our mission is to deter, observe and report. We will not carry weapons of any kind.

Neighborhood

We acknowledge that this program cannot be successful without a commitment to one another as neighbors. We agree to be open minded when a neighbor comes to us with a problem and pledge to do our best to resolve neighborhood problems as a team.



Checklist for setting up a Neighborhood Watch

☐ Review the Coordinator's Handbook.

☐ Conduct a door-to-door survey (sample enclosed).

Speak directly to your neighbors. Determine their level of interest in starting a Neighborhood Watch Program. Have them fill out the survey forms while you wait. Remember that 50% of the homes you target must complete a survey form indicating that interest exists. Failure to conduct the survey in-person can often result in an insufficient response.

☐ Compile the surveys.

When you have confirmed that you have at least 50% interest, select your Block Captains based on the responses on the survey form, or from volunteers. Most will check "maybe", rather than "yes". You need a Block Captain for every 5-10 homes and they should be staggered throughout the community. As Coordinator, you can also serve as a Block Captain, if necessary.

☐ Contact your Community Resource Officer.

Your first meeting will be held with your Block Captains and your CRO. Make sure you coordinate the date with your CRO before you contact your Block Captains.

☐ Locate a meeting site.

As Coordinator, you are responsible for identifying and reserving a meeting site. Churches, clubhouses, schools, fire departments and the Neighborhood Resource Center are generally available. The police department can supply you with a flyer and all the copies you will need unless you have other resources. Be sure to coordinate the date with your CRO first.

☐ Distribute the meeting invitation.

Flyers should be passed out 7-10 days prior to the meeting. Additionally, meeting signs should be posted the day before and Block Captains should call everyone on their list the night before to obtain a commitment. This is the best way to ensure a turnout of at least 50%. The Watch will not be sanctioned if the attendance criteria are not met – so make the calls.

☐ Conduct initial meeting.

This meeting will be to confirm interest in the program, the purpose for the program and identify potential issues to be addressed by the program.

☐ Conduct training.

Once the program has been sanctioned the police department will conduct the Neighborhood Watch training for the community. Please contact your Community Resource Officer at 703-787-7627 or 703-435-3134.

- ☐ **Follow up with the police department.**
Send in your Watch roster, a patrol schedule, and a map depicting neighborhood sign placement.
- ☐ **Activate your Watch.**
Send out the patrol schedule and roster regularly. Share information the police department provides on crime in your area.
- ☐ **Schedule regular meetings.**
Conduct regular meetings to communicate progress, share ideas, and keep the Watch alive and effective in your neighborhood.
- ☐ **Celebrate your success!**
Take time to celebrate your organization and recognize those individuals who contribute to the organization. Take this time also to recruit new participants into the group.

Minimum Requirements for a Neighborhood Watch Program

Each Watch must meet and maintain the following four basic standards in order to remain sanctioned by the police. If your Watch ever fails to meet any of these requirements, contact your Community Resource Officer for help. Watches that are unable to meet the requirements will be terminated.

Newsletter

All Watches shall be required to put out a periodic newsletter to all members. If the newsletter is not a monthly edition, some action should be taken to get the statistics out to the Block Captains on a monthly basis. Watch information and statistics may also be incorporated into an existing neighborhood newsletter.

Patrol

All Watches will be required to have an active patrol and submit a periodic written copy of the patrol roster to their Community Resource Officer for the Watch file.

Training

All Watches will be required to maintain at least 50% of the Watch members trained in home security and personal protection. Re-training programs can be scheduled with the Community Resource Officer.

Roster

All Watches will be required to maintain an up-to-date roster of members complete with phone numbers. The Community Resource Officer is required to maintain a list of Watch members so periodic updates should be supplied to them.

Upon annual review, if these requirements are not met, the Community Resource Officer will:

- ❖ Phone or contact you by letter to identify the problem and give you the option to comply.
- ❖ Provide any additional training or guidance as needed.
- ❖ Send a letter to the Watch members warning that their Watch status is in jeopardy.
- ❖ Terminate the Watch and pull the Neighborhood Watch signs.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

How much time is this going to take? Neighborhood Watch requires a minimal amount of time for neighborhood participants. There is just one training meeting to attend and the more participants the easier it is to spread the schedule amongst concerned citizens.

How long is the training program? The training program is approximately 1 ½ hours long. The program covers home security, theft prevention, crime reporting, Watch patrol, and safety.

Do I have to patrol? Patrol is a requirement for Neighborhood Watch but there are many ways to meet this objective. Patrols can be carried out from your home where you monitor streets from your windows. Members who cannot participate in patrol could support other objectives such as attending the training program, utilizing lighting or compiling the newsletter.

What good do the patrols do and how often would I have to patrol? The patrols serve three primary purposes:

- ❖ Create a visible deterrent to criminals.
- ❖ Keep people involved in the program.
- ❖ Help the police by using their familiarity of the area to identify suspicious activity or circumstances.

The number of participants and the incidents of criminal activity determine the frequency of Watch patrols.

What does a Block Captain do? Block Captains are the point of contact for 5-10 homes surrounding them. The Block Captains assist with surveys, hand out crime prevention materials and welcome new neighbors to the program.

Can I participate even if I'm renting a property in the community? Yes, we need your support. Criminals don't care if you own or rent, and neither does the Watch.

Do Neighborhood Watch Programs really work? Police studies consistently show a significant crime reduction in Watch areas.

Do we have a crime problem? The police department will provide us with a detailed crime report at the training program. However, we don't need to wait for a crime problem to start the Watch. There are also many other benefits to the program, other than preventing crime, such as community awareness, getting to know your neighbors, and getting to know your local police officials.

Does it cost anything to operate a Neighborhood Watch Program? There is typically no cost involved in creating a successful Neighborhood Watch Program. Some neighborhoods may choose to purchase equipment such as notebooks or flashlights but this is not a requirement.

Where can I find out more information on Neighborhood Watch? There are many resources to find out information on Neighborhood Watch. Please check with your local law enforcement officials, the Public Library, and the World-Wide Web. You may contact:

Herndon Police
1481 Sterling Road
Herndon, VA 20170
Non-emergency: 703-435-6846

Neighborhood Resource Center
1086 Elden Street
Herndon, VA 20170
703-435-4388



Neighborhood Watch Survey (Sample)

A survey is being conducted in your neighborhood to determine if sufficient interest exists to start a Neighborhood Watch Program. The Herndon Virginia Police sponsors this valuable program. A minimum level of interest must exist to proceed with the program and support is needed and appreciated.

Thank you for taking the time to assist with our survey.

Would you support efforts to make your street and community a safer place to live?

☐Yes ☐No

Would you be willing to support the Neighborhood Watch Program on your street?

☐Yes ☐No

Would you be able to patrol the neighborhood once every 2 or 3 months?

☐Yes ☐No ☐Maybe

Would you consider serving as a Block Captain?

☐Yes ☐No ☐Maybe

Date: _____

Time: _____ PM/AM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Other: _____

Initials: _____

(Intentionally blank)

Block Captain Letter (Sample)

Dear Block Captain,

Thank you for volunteering to serve as Block Captain for your Neighborhood Watch.

The role of the Block Captain is a critical link in the success of the Neighborhood Watch Program. Your job, as Block Captain, will be to serve as the point of contact between the Watch Coordinator and several neighbors around you (called your block).

- As a Block Captain, here are your responsibilities:
- Attend the Block Captain training.
- Collect the remaining Watch Surveys from your block. Surveys must be conducted in person, face-to-face, with your neighbors. There are only three questions so you could just wait while they fill it out or you can fill it out for them while asking the questions.
- Compile a list of your block member's contact information.
- Hand out flyers for the community meeting.
- Call all of your neighbors on your block to remind them about the meeting and establish their commitment to attend. Years of experience have proven that if you fail to make these calls, there will not be a sufficient turnout.
- Attend the Watch training program.

Thank you again for your commitment to serving your neighborhood and the Herndon community.

Sincerely,

Community Resources Officer
Herndon Virginia Police

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Neighborhood Watch Block Roster (Samples)

A roster can be developed in any manner. Here are just two samples in spreadsheet and standard document layouts. The method for your needs may vary.

Spreadsheet layout:

Watch Location	Block Captain	Name	Address	Home Phone	Work Phone	Cell Phone	Email

Document layout:

Watch Location: _____

Block Captain: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

(Intentionally blank)

*The Town of
Herndon welcomes
you to Neighborhood
Watch*